

IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
FOR THE SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF MISSISSIPPI
NORTHERN DIVISION

SHAWN MACKEY PLAINIFF
VERSUS NO. 3:23-CV-233-DPJ-ASH
JOHN PIGOTT, ET AL. DEFENDANTS

DEPOSITION OF DONNIE CAUGHMAN

APPEARANCES NOTED HEREIN

DATE: SEPTEMBER 18, 2024
PLACE: MISSISSIPPI ATTORNEY GENERAL'S OFFICE
550 HIGH STREET, SUITE 1100
JACKSON, MISSISSIPPI
TIME: 9:30 a.m.

REPORTED BY: AMANDA MAGEE WOOTTON, CSR, RPR
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1 Q Okay. Did you ever learn why?

2 A Well, yes, ma'am. There was a problem with
3 her and some of the presidents that they didn't see
4 eye to eye on the way certain things were done. And
5 I'm telling you things that, as a new person coming on
6 that board, I heard and was told by other board
7 members and even heard it from one or two presidents
8 indirectly.

9 But that was -- that was what I understood,
10 that she -- she and some of the presidents were at
11 odds over some issues related to the junior college
12 system -- community college system.

13 Q So were you present when she announced her
14 resignation?

15 A I was.

16 Q Okay. And was that during a board meeting?

17 A It was.

18 Q And tell me what happened.

19 A Well, first it went into executive session,
20 as I recall, ma'am, and discussed all of these things
21 that the other board members had heard and been told.

22 And we came out of executive session, called
23 Andrea back in there and asked for her resignation or
24 to be dismissed, and she resigned.

25 They -- I think Mr. Pigott, who was the

1 Q Did you vote to change the minimum
2 requirements for the executive director's position?

3 A Yes, ma'am.

4 Q And why?

5 A I didn't think that a -- that a doctorate
6 degree should be a requirement for our director.

7 Q Why not?

8 A One, I didn't think an academian should
9 be -- we needed an academian in that position. This
10 position was one more of leadership, relationships
11 with employees and the legislature, more than having a
12 Ph.D.

13 And we were paying way too much money for
14 Ms. Mayfield -- Dr. Mayfield. And I felt like anyone
15 with a doctorate degree is going to demand that --
16 almost that same kind of salary, which we all felt was
17 way overboard.

18 Q What's your highest degree?

19 A Master's.

20 Q Okay. And where did you receive your
21 Master's degree?

22 A Southern Mississippi.

23 Q And what was that Master's degree in?

24 A It was in educational administration.

25 Q And did you ever work in educational

1 Q Okay.

2 A I think I -- I went on to -- my first
3 meeting might have been in March of 2021, something
4 like that, anyway. It was all coming apart when I got
5 there.

6 Q Can you explain?

7 A Oh, the troubles. When I got there, you
8 know, some of the other board members, in just round
9 table discussions before the meeting, whatever, there
10 seemed to be problems with Dr. Mayfield and some of
11 the presidents of the community college system.

12 And, in turn, the board had problems with
13 her. And so that's what I mean. I could tell that
14 there were things not just right there with the
15 community college staff and system, with the community
16 college board.

17 Q When did you first meet Shawn Mackey?

18 A I guess my first day there, ma'am, my first
19 meeting. He came up and introduced himself to me. I
20 said, you know, "I know you from somewhere." I
21 said -- we got to talking and figured out how -- how I
22 knew him.

23 Q Before you voted to name Kell Smith interim
24 executive director, did you review his personnel file?

25 A No, ma'am.

1 development work?

2 A I did not. No, ma'am.

3 Q So next to Miller, who -- so since -- you
4 comparing Mackey and Miller?

5 A I was comparing Miller to both Mackey and
6 Smith.

7 Q Okay. And then -- and you said Miller would
8 have been your first choice?

9 A He would have.

10 Q Who would have been the second choice?

11 A Kell.

12 Q Okay. And why?

13 A Because --

14 Q Because he's white, like Miller?

15 A No, ma'am.

16 MR. DANIELS: Object to the form.

17 A No, ma'am. No, ma'am. By this time I had,
18 you know, learned a little bit, and I had listened to
19 a little bit. And it just appeared to me that Kell
20 was the best fit for what we were looking for, someone
21 that got along with employees, did his job, went to
22 the legislature, had a good relationship with those
23 guys. And I just felt like that was the best thing
24 for us at the time.

25 MS. ROSS: (Continuing.)

1 please? It says -- or these statements. "It is not
2 that a black person has never served as the executive
3 director of MCCB as stated by the charging party. A
4 more statistically accurate statement is that a black
5 person has not yet been selected."

6 A I think it explains itself.

7 Q What does that mean? I don't understand.

8 A It means no black person has been selected.

9 Q Well, if they're not selected, then they can
10 never serve, right?

11 A No, not until you're selected.

12 Q And what was the legitimate
13 nondiscriminatory reason that the board gave for
14 Mackey's non-selection?

15 MR. DANIELS: Object to the form.

16 You can answer.

17 A Ma'am, I think it was not any one thing. As
18 we've already discussed, the issues that came up about
19 Dr. Mackey, his personality, and so forth, that raised
20 concerns and the after hours rental houses or whatever
21 it was he had to do also. But it was primarily a
22 personality thing.

23 Q And you don't see any of that in this
24 response to the EEOC, do you?

25 A Not that I read awhile ago, ma'am. I sure

1 A You're right.

2 Q Was that because Mackey was a black man?

3 A No, ma'am.

4 Q Okay. If someone says something negative
5 about Kell Smith, would you try to find out if the
6 person is being truthful or not?

7 A It would depend on what negative they were
8 talking about, ma'am.

9 Q Okay.

10 A If he was -- if they say, "Well, I think
11 he's taking money from the Mississippi Community
12 College Board," yes. If they said he is running
13 around on his wife, I don't care.

14 Q Okay. So did someone tell you that Mackey
15 was taking money from the community college board?

16 A No, ma'am.

17 Q Did anybody tell you that Mackey was running
18 around on his wife?

19 A No, ma'am.

20 Q What did these people tell you about Mackey?

21 MR. DANIELS: Object.

22 A Ma'am, I've already answered that more than
23 one time. The only -- the only criticism I heard from
24 Dr. Mackey was he had problems getting along with
25 employees, with people. He had people problems.